

Nor shall this Constitution prevent Congress or the States from enacting systems of public campaign financing, including those designed to restrict the influence of private wealth by offsetting campaign spending or independent expenditures with increased public funding.

The tidal wave of independent expenditures creates an unmistakable appearance of impropriety, and over time it cannot help but corrupt. The Court having failed to bear witness to these debilitating changes since Buckley, the people have the power to act. Independent expenditures, like direct contributions, should be subject to reasonable limits and should be transparent. And corporations are not people; for if they were, as Justice Stevens points out, how could we deprive them of the right to vote?

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Like most of my colleagues last week when we were home, I took as many opportunities as possible to speak at civic clubs, meet with groups of people, and talk about a range of issues. But I also always brought up the fact that we continue to fund a failed policy in Afghanistan. I was pleased and also humbled by the response from these groups as they agreed with me totally; and many of these groups, Mr. Speaker, were actually veterans. I represent the Third Congressional District of North Carolina, the home of Camp Lejeune, Cherry Point Marine Air Station, and we have over 60,000 retired military.

Those who were in the military who are now retired said, You're absolutely right; why doesn't Congress wake up? There's nothing we're going to change in Afghanistan. Stop wasting lives and spending money.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to this. On Monday, an AP article:

Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Sunday ordered all U.S. special forces to leave Wardak within 2 weeks and requested that their operations there cease immediately. The restive province, which neighbors Kabul province and is viewed as a gateway to the capital, has been the focus of counterinsurgency efforts in recent years.

Why do we fund a man that doesn't even like us? I don't understand that at all. How in the world can the Congress in its wisdom not speak out and say, Listen, you're talking about a 10-year agreement after 2014? How can a country that's financially broke commit to 10 more years after 2014? I do not understand that.

In fact, I have introduced, with ROSA DELAUNO, H.R. 125, the Congressional Oversight of Afghanistan Agreement Act of 2013, which is a bipartisan bill introduced by us, and we are reaching out to our other colleagues to say, Congress, let's get on the floor. Let's debate whether we should stay there 10 years after 2014 or not.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely believe that the American people would back this legislation because the American people have seen the total chaos right here this week, last week, and the next couple weeks to come talking about sequestration. But I don't think the leader of Afghanistan is worried about sequestration because we're going to send him all of the money he wants while we tell the American people, We're going to cut your jobs; we're going to cut your programs. That, to me, is absolutely ridiculous and unacceptable.

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Mr. Speaker, it is time for the American people to say to Congress, let's start rebuilding America and stop rebuilding the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, beside me is a poster of a young Army officer who lost both legs and an arm. We fail to realize here in Congress, maybe not all of us, but some of us, that we're still at war. Young men and women are still getting their legs blown off, they're losing their lives many times—not as often as in the past. But let's wake up, Congress. Let's start debating what we're going to do to rebuild our country and stop trying to rebuild the rest of the world.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I will ask God to please not let the American people and not let Congress forget that we have young men and women in Afghanistan. And I will close by asking God to please bless the United States of America and let us never, never forget the sacrifice of war.

SEQUESTRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we continue an unfortunate and unnecessary countdown to the irrational and reckless automatic cuts the Republican policies will impose. The countdown stands at three days. Unless Congress acts by Friday, the cuts will take effect, with dangerous results across the country and in the Fifth District of Maryland, my district.

Approximately, 46,000 civilian defense personnel will be at risk of being furloughed at installations in Maryland, including Pax River, Webster Field, Indian Head, and Joint Base Andrews. This will undermine their ability to serve our Nation and keep America safe.

Federal defense contracts could be canceled or reduced, which will translate into lost jobs—an economic hurt for the communities they affect.

There will be cuts to the FDA, which, as I said, are in Maryland's Fifth District. National FDA cuts could result in fewer food safety inspectors for consumers.

And children will be kicked out of Head Start. There will be longer wait

times for those seeking to access job-training and placement services. Our first responders will lose much-needed personnel.

This year alone in Maryland, the sequester could mean up to 500 fewer victims of domestic violence receiving critical services. And around 2,050 children unable to receive vaccines for communicable diseases like measles, mumps, whooping cough and the flu. This is not a rational way forward.

Law enforcement could lose about \$317,000 in my own State for this year in grants that support crime prevention and drug treatment and enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, the people of my district are hardworking folks who just want the chance to pursue the American Dream. Many of them are Federal employees who have already been forced to cut back as a result of some of the actions that we've taken. Others are defense contractors who support our men and women in uniform who are at the point of the spear and rely on these defense contractors to keep them well-equipped and well-trained. They cannot afford the arbitrary, irrational cuts that are set to take effect in just 4 days.

Even if some here believe Congress does not have a responsibility to create opportunities, at least I think we can agree that Congress has a responsibility not to prevent them. I believe Congress has an important role to play in making sure our businesses can compete, our communities can thrive, and our people can make it in America.

That's what is at stake in the policies that we are confronting today. They remain extremely disappointed that some in this Chamber are actively supporting the sequester's painful and indiscriminate cuts as a viable path forward. As a matter of fact, many Members on the Republican side have said "bring it on, this is what we want to do." To do so, in my opinion, is gravely irresponsible.

Marylanders, and all Americans, deserve a Congress that takes our challenges seriously. None of our challenges are more serious or more immediate this week than the dangers of allowing the cuts to take effect.

That's why I have cosponsored a bill with Mr. VAN HOLLEN and many others on the Democratic side of the aisle to replace the cuts for the remainder of the year with a balanced approach to reduction, a balanced approach which will bring down our deficit, bring down our debt, but will do so in a responsible way.

Mr. Speaker and Mr. Majority Leader, you have the power to bring that bill to the floor today. And if you don't agree with it, don't vote for it. But allow the American people to see their representatives have the opportunity to vote for a rational policy so that we do not pursue an irrational policy that will undermine jobs in America and the growth of our economy.

Only a balanced solution can achieve the savings we need and still afford our